GOOD DECISIONS - Be Water Aware

By Christina A. Worthington

The month of May is National Water Safety Month! With the promise of summer comes more time spent near and in the water. Every day, about 10 people are the victims of drowning. Of these, two are children aged 14 or younger. Knowing these tips and best practices can help you prevent tragedy while enjoying water activities this summer and year-round!

Develop swimming skills. It may surprise you to know that most people do not have basic swimming skills. Taking part in formal swimming lessons reduces the risk of drowning among children ages 1-4. Learning these fundamental skills can give kids a leg up on preventing unintentional drowning. However, it is never too late for swim lessons. Check with your local fitness and recreation departments to see what swim and safety lessons are available.

Wear proper swim attire. Life jackets can save lives! If you are in or around natural water, you have likely been cautioned or required to wear a life jacket. If you are involved in an activity like boating, be aware of where life jackets are located and how they are properly fitted. When swimming, avoid choosing a swimsuit that is similar to the water color. Bright colored and patterned swimsuits can help others identify you in the water if you require help.
**Be aware of other factors.** Be conscious of other elements that can create more risk while participating in water activities.

- Avoid alcohol intake before and during swimming, boating, or other water activities.
- Clear the pool and pool deck of toys so that children may not be tempted to enter the pool area unsupervised.
- Know the local weather conditions and forecast. Strong winds and thunderstorms can appear extremely quickly.